

- The three leading causes of infant mortality in Tennessee in 2001 were congenital anomalies<sup>3</sup>, short gestation and unspecified low birth weight<sup>4</sup>, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). These causes were responsible for 44% of all infant deaths in the Tennessee population, for 49% among blacks and 42% among whites. Congenital anomalies, and short gestation and low birth weight were the leading causes of neonatal mortality for all three groups. SIDS ranked first as a cause of postneonatal mortality. This disease accounted for 23.4% of all postneonatal mortality in Tennessee, and 20.3% of corresponding deaths among whites and 29.4% among blacks. Unintentional injury ranked as the third leading cause of postneonatal mortality in Tennessee as a whole, and for both whites and blacks.
- Short gestation and low birth weight accounted for more than one-third of neonatal deaths among blacks, compared to about one-fifth among whites, while congenital anomalies represented 12% of deaths among black neonates but 23% among whites. Deaths from respiratory distress were equally represented by race at about 7% of deaths to neonates in 2001; this is the third leading cause of death in that age-group.
- SIDS represented a higher percentage of postneonatal deaths among blacks at 29%, compared to whites at 20%, as did congenital anomalies, at 24% of black neonatal deaths and about 18% of white deaths. Accidents were only slightly more prevalent as a cause of postneonatal deaths among whites at 11.5%, compared to 9.8% among blacks in 2001.

### **Selected Cause-Specific Mortality Trends**

- Homicide has exacted an especially heavy toll among younger black males in Tennessee. However, there is evidence of an improving situation. The rate in 2001 for black males aged 15-34 years was 87.9 per 100,000 population, compared to a rate of 135.8 in 1990, a decrease of around 35%. The upturn in rates in 2000 to 99.4 per 100,000, after reaching an all-time low in 1999 of 86.2, reversed again in 2001. The 2001 rate represents a 44% decline from the 1992 high rate of 157 per 100,000 population.
- The suicide rate at aged 15-34 for whites and blacks of either gender fluctuated between 1990 and 2001. But the rate for black males in 2001, 20.6 per 100,000

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<sup>3</sup> Congenital anomalies are formally referred to as "Congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities" in the ICD-10 coding. The name is shortened here to match that used in ICD-9 coding.

<sup>4</sup> This cause of infant death is referred to as "Disorders related to short gestation and low birth weight, not elsewhere classified" in the ICD-10 codes.